

STAFF REPORT

TO: Mayor and City Council DATE: May 16, 2014
VIA: Gary Jackson, City Manager
FROM: William J. Anderson, Chief of Police
PREPARED BY: Capt. Stony Gonce
SUBJECT: Implementation of the Asheville SafeCam Program

Summary Statement: The consideration of implementation of the Asheville SafeCam Program. The purpose of the program is to encourage business and property owners within the City of Asheville to utilize their surveillance cameras and make areas safer for shoppers and the community while providing a public service to the citizens.

Review: The program allows owners/occupants of commercial and residential buildings to register their existing camera systems free of charge, with the Asheville Police Department, and assist in criminal investigations by providing the digital recordings upon request. This is expected to assist in identifying offenders in such crimes as vandalism, assaults, shoplifting, and other crimes. History has shown that surveillance footage from these sources has aided investigations related to businesses, public safety, as well as identifying suspicious activity in residential neighborhoods. The camera system must be installed on the outside of the building to provide surveillance for the business, residence, and the public space.

In order to be eligible, applicants must be the owner of an occupied property or a legal tenant with the approval of the property owner, or an established business association or community based organization representing a number of businesses in a particular area.

During the course of an investigation of an incident, an officer would make contact with the person listed on the registration form. If necessary, arrangements would then be made to obtain a copy of the video to assist in the investigation. However, obtaining a copy would not always be necessary. Occasionally, it would suffice for the officer to merely view the recording. By having the SafeCam partners identified on a map, officers would know the locations around the area of an incident to begin searching for surveillance footage. This could serve to expedite the investigative process.

The application process will generally be handled by the Crime Prevention Officer and Community Resource Officers. Interested participants would also be encouraged to seek assistance from Police Information Desk personnel.

Strategic Operating Plan: This program supports the focus area of High Quality of Life by implementing strategies to significantly improve public safety.

Pros:

- Assist with criminal investigations
- No cost for businesses or property owners
- Totally voluntary

- Proven effective in other cities
- Possible crime deterrent
- Partnership opportunity for police with community
- Allows community to assist Law Enforcement

Cons:

- Staff time to review applications and register SafeCam participants

Fiscal Impact:

- None

Recommendation: Staff recommends City Council support implementation of the Asheville SafeCam Program.

Attachments:

- (1) Asheville SafeCam Logo
- (2) SafeCam Application
- (3) SafeCam Brochure